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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 15 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)
later: Ms. Seanedzu (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Ghana)
later: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)

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08-55001 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 60: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/63/41)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/63/160, A/63/203* and A/63/227)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (A/63/308)

Mr. Khane (Secretary of the Committee) drew the attention of delegations to the fact that document A/63/203 had been replaced by document A/63/203.*

1. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) highlighted the progress achieved since the beginning of her current mandate, especially in combating impunity for perpetrators of grave violations of the rights of children and in mainstreaming the issue of children and armed conflict in the activities of the United Nations system, in particular those dealing with peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding. After summarizing the main points of her report (A/63/227), she stressed the importance of the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1612 (2005) and the implementation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism and gave specific examples of the usefulness of those measures.

2. She said that she had made field visits to many conflict zones where action by the United Nations had made considerable progress possible; however, targeted measures were still needed at the national level to put an end to impunity once and for all. Nevertheless, positive developments and an end to the wars in Liberia, Nepal and Sierra Leone had led to a decrease in the total number of child soldiers in the world, and there was a possibility that the downward trend would continue.

3. During her field visits, especially in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq, she had had many occasions to meet children who were caught up in armed conflicts and who had begged her to make their voices heard and to work for the protection of their most basic rights, such as the right to go to school. In addition to the grave violations of those rights, acts of sexual violence against children were some of the heinous consequences of war that must be suppressed with determination.

4. Recalling the recommendations contained in her report, she said that donors should provide both immediate and long-term financing for the reintegration of children so that child protection advocates could do their work more effectively. The strategic review (A/62/228) of the Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306 and Add.1) pointed out that conflict was a significant obstacle to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The point was illustrated by the tragic story of a girl who had been the victim of the *coupeurs de route* in the northwest of the Central African Republic. Most of the children in that country were malnourished and had little education; they grew up in an atmosphere of violence; and their prospects for the future were very dim. For those children, the rights enshrined in conventions and resolutions were meaningless. The international community must redouble its efforts to ensure that the moral imperative to protect children in armed conflict continued to override all political considerations. That conviction inspired and would continue to inspire the members of her team.

5. **Mr. Houry** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), recalling that 2008 was the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, said that UNICEF welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, both of which would reinforce and complement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. In the face of the crises currently shaking the globe, UNICEF urged Member States to put children first in all measures taken to mitigate the impact of the crises.

7. Significant advances had been made to ensure the protection and well-being of children exposed to armed conflict, thanks, in particular, to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). UNICEF also appreciated the valuable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, especially in the field of advocacy.

8. The question of child labour, which was a cause and a consequence of poverty, could not be addressed in isolation. UNICEF stood ready to work with Governments, the private sector and other development

actors on a comprehensive approach to ending child labour. The International Conference of Labour Statisticians was set to review the definition of child labour. The inclusion of household chores in such a definition would finally recognize the work of girls, a step that would make gender inequality more visible.

9. On the issue of sexual exploitation, UNICEF would be represented at the highest level at the Third World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and hoped that Member States would set out goals and recommendations for improving prevention and application of the law in that area.

10. On the question of children living without the protection of their families, UNICEF welcomed the progress that had been made in elaborating a set of United Nations guidelines for the appropriate use and conditions of alternative care for children, and urged Member States to continue working to finalize the adoption of the guidelines.

11. Significant progress had been on follow-up to the commitments made in the Plan of Action contained in resolution S-27/2, entitled "a world fit for children". The number of deaths due to measles had continued to fall; malaria prevention measures had been expanded; child mortality had also continued to fall; and net primary school enrolment was at least 90 per cent in all but two regions. In 2007, an estimated 198,000 HIV-positive children had received antiretroviral treatment, representing a 2.6-fold increase since 2005. Data to monitor the protection of children had become increasingly available. Yet much more remained to be done in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the special session of the General Assembly on children.

12. UNICEF urged Member States and the international community to fulfil, with a sense of urgency, the commitments reaffirmed at the commemorative high-level plenary meeting to build a world fit for children and to address the rights and well-being of children.

13. **Mr. Mbaidjol** (Director, New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), introducing document A/63/203*, said that the Secretary-General would be filling the post of Special Representative on violence against children without delay.

14. Drawing the attention of delegations to the annex to the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/160), which reproduced the decision of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to request approval from the General Assembly to work in two chambers, he said that that method of work had in the past enabled the Committee to consider a substantial number of reports and was especially necessary, since at the current rate it would take until 2011 to consider the reports already submitted.

15. Lastly, he drew attention to the three general comments adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child between February 2006 and January 2008, which were contained in its report (A/63/41).

16. **Ms. Lee** Yanghee (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child), introducing the Committee's report (A/63/41), said that the system of working in two chambers had been very effective in reducing the backlog of reports pending consideration. All concluding observations had been adopted in plenary session. The Committee was again facing a backlog, in particular because it was responsible for monitoring the implementation of three instruments, under which States had reporting requirements. The Committee would therefore like to request the General Assembly at its current session to approve appropriate financial support for it to work in two chambers during four sessions over the next two years, in order to review the reports submitted in a timely manner.

17. The Committee had undertaken the elaboration of two more general comments, one on the rights of indigenous children and another on the right of the child to be heard, and expected to adopt them in 2009.

18. The initiative proposed by non-governmental organizations of creating an individual complaints mechanism similar to those established under all other human rights treaties would significantly contribute to the overall protection of children's rights. The Committee would also like to draw attention to the draft United Nations guidelines for the appropriate use and conditions of alternative care of children, in the elaboration of which the Committee had actively participated.

19. With regard to the harmonization and improved efficiency of working methods of treaty bodies, the Committee was currently revising its reporting guidelines in order to make them consistent with the harmonized guidelines on reporting for the common

core document. It had also actively participated in the inter-committee meetings with a view to improving coordination between treaty bodies.

20. The Committee continued to be active in the promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the implementation of its concluding observations and was pleased that a large number of States had ratified the two protocols to the Convention. It was actively involved in the preparation phases for the Third World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which would assess implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and relevant recommendations of the Committee.

21. Noting that 2009 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and 2008, the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she said that the Committee on the Rights of the Child was particularly concerned about the situation of children in detention. The Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund had extended observer status to the Committee, and the Committee attached great importance to its close cooperation with the Fund as well as with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, national human rights institutions and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

22. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation), noting that all forms of violations committed against children should be accorded the same degree of importance and all the activities of United Nations entities should take into consideration issues affecting children, requested clarification on the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the measures to be taken to ensure its effective implementation.

23. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) asked whether a Special Representative on violence against children would soon be appointed and asked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict why her report, although it referred to children detained in military prisons and children as victims of "collateral damage" in bombardments of civilian towns, made no mention either of the situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territories or of Israel's obligations as an occupying Power.

24. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that the issue of children in detention was of crucial importance and merited more than a brief mention. She asked the Special Representative what should be done to ensure the release and rehabilitation of and psychological assistance to those children, and what role the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict could play to resolve that situation.

25. It was not advisable for the Committee on the Rights of the Child to hold meetings in two chambers, as the reports should be considered in plenary, in order to ensure transparency and objectivity. Perhaps, instead, the Committee could envisage holding more sessions.

26. She asked when a special representative on violence against children would be appointed and how UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict intended to coordinate their work with the new Special Representative.

27. **Mr. Alakhder** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) asked for more information on the issue of detained children, a matter which needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

28. **Mr. Babadoudou** (Benin) asked the representative of UNICEF if he could comment on the problem of child trafficking, which was prevalent throughout the subregion, and asked the Special Representative how she intended to pursue her work, since many violations and situations did not fall under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), on which her mandate was based.

29. **Mr. Zeidan** (Observer for Palestine) asked why the situation of Palestinian children — including those detained in Israeli prisons, who were cut off from their families and subject to torture — had not been addressed in the report of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and what the United Nations was doing to ensure their protection and the enforcement of international humanitarian law.

30. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked whether the new Special Representative on violence against children would be appointed before the Third Committee completed its work for the session, and how the General Assembly, beyond reaffirming its support to the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, could

contribute to enhancing the accountability of those that exploited children, combating impunity and establishing long-term reintegration programmes for children who had been involved with armed groups.

31. **Ms. Pi** (Uruguay) also asked when the new Special Representative on violence against children would be appointed.

32. **Ms. Nadjaf** (Afghanistan) said that, although Afghanistan had set up a monitoring and reporting mechanism, Afghan children continued to be preyed upon by the Taliban, who used them in suicide attacks, burned down girls' schools and used intimidation to prevent families from sending their girls to school.

33. **Mr. Khoshnaw** (Iraq) wondered about the notion of children's "voluntarily" joining armed groups, whereas it seemed that children could only be manipulated by ideological groups. He also wished to know how the new Special Representative on violence against children and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict would divide their responsibilities.

34. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) responded that the situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territories was addressed in a separate report, which had been published and was available on her Office's website, and pointed out that the number of children wounded or killed had decreased significantly since the ceasefire.

35. On the issue of detained children, she said that, in the light of the guiding principles relating to justice for minors — by which the best interest of the child prevailed in all circumstances, and detention was a measure of last resort and to which alternatives should be provided — the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, Iraq and Afghanistan, was clearly a matter of concern from the legal perspective. She and her Office were working with the Governments concerned to try to improve the situation.

36. She planned to work together with the new Special Representative on violence against children to explore modalities for collaboration and the possibility of carrying out joint missions. Situations of armed conflict generated all kinds of acts of violence against children. Within the framework of her mandate, which was very political in nature, she was responsible for conducting pro-child advocacy activities. She hoped that the two Special Representatives could find a way to ensure that their work was complementary.

37. In response to the questions posed by the representative of Benin, she said that in order to tackle the serious problem of cross-border recruitment of children and trafficking in children in the subregion, programmes for the reintegration of child soldiers would need to be strengthened to prevent them from being enlisted in other conflicts. As to the continuation of her mandate under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), she would try to ensure that all forms of violations would be considered by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and that a mechanism would be established to take measures against the 16 persistent violators of children's rights in situations of armed conflict. Her Office had worked with the sponsors of the resolution to improve some aspects in particular, such as that of the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence, reintegration programmes and respect for all the rights of children.

38. In response to the question raised by the representative of Iraq, she clarified that the notion of voluntarily joining armed groups could not apply to children under 18. However, many children were not abducted by ideological groups, but joined them willingly, seduced by the prospects of a heroic death. It was thus important to understand the root causes of recruitment of child soldiers in order to remedy the situation.

39. **Mr. Houry** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) assured delegations that the new Special Representative on violence against children would soon be appointed since interviews with the candidates were nearly completed. The UNICEF strategy for the protection of children covered all the recommendations contained in the study on violence against children (A/62/209), and UNICEF would work in close cooperation with the new Special Representative, as it was already doing with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and would provide it with all the necessary support.

40. UNICEF had adopted a regional approach in addressing the problem of child trafficking in West Africa. He wished to stress the active involvement of village committees and the vigorous efforts countries in that region were making in such areas as prevention

activities conducted among children, legislative reforms, and programmes for the reintegration of children who had been victims of trafficking.

41. **Mr. Mbaidjol** (Director, New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) recalled that General Assembly resolution 62/141 outlined the mandate of the new Special Representative on violence against children, who would have the responsibility of coordinating all relevant activities.

42. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that to reach the goals set out in the Declaration and Plan of Action, *A World Fit for Children*, the African Union had adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action entitled *Africa Fit for Children*.

43. The rights of orphans and vulnerable children were protected by several policy guidelines and international and regional conventions; at the national level, most SADC countries now had established policies that had resulted in plans of action and ways of caring for such children.

44. Children being one of the groups most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, the Community urged its partners and the international community to honour the commitments they made during the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS to provide sufficient resources to fight infectious diseases. The Community continued to conduct programmes for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, but more needed to be done to ensure that pregnant women could receive antiretroviral prophylaxis.

45. The Community had invested substantially in giving girls as well as boys access to education. To improve the quality of the teaching, it encouraged partnerships between governments, parents and communities and had begun to organize more systematic consultations with representatives of civil society and donors in the field of education, but continued to come up against the problem of limited resources.

46. Firmly resolved to fight violence against women and children, the countries of southern Africa had developed policies and programmes that targeted the advancement of girls, especially in the area of education. They had also adopted new laws aimed at penalizing the perpetrators of violence against children and taken action in the social and cultural fields to protect children's rights and change traditional practices and attitudes that undermined them. The Community once again asked the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on violence against children, who would help States to address all aspects of the issue.

47. In order to achieve the goals of the special session of the General Assembly on children, thereby furthering the Millennium Development Goals, international cooperation should be enhanced and official development assistance (ODA) commitments should be honoured.

48. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), said that he was speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;* the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and in addition, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine.

49. As the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child approached, States should reaffirm their commitment to implement it by endeavouring to defend the individual rights of children within their families and society, and to cooperate with the Committee on the Rights of the Child which saw to its application. The Convention had prompted the adoption of national laws protecting children's rights in various areas, including the struggle against violence, forced labour and exploitation. It now remained for a special representative on violence against children to be appointed as soon as possible, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/141. There was also the possibility of drafting a third optional protocol to the Convention giving the Committee on the Rights of the Child the authority to consider complaints from individuals.

50. The European Union had adopted Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, which had been useful for developing strategies in some of the countries directly concerned. The European Union was coordinating policies and programmes relating to human rights, security and development that would

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to participate in the stabilization and association process.

allow it to deal with the effects of armed conflict on children. It hailed the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, which had enabled many thousands of child soldiers throughout the world to be demobilized. Lastly, the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups, endorsed by 75 countries, would now be the subject of a Follow-up Forum, whose first meeting had been held in September 2008 in New York. Progress on the question of child soldiers was linked to that of international criminal justice, as in the case of the arrest of warlords in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

51. It should be possible to make a more effective response to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents after the convening in Brazil in November 2008 of the Third World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

52. Underscoring the many challenges that had to be met before the rights of children could be effectively protected, the European Union recalled that 2009 would be dedicated to human rights education and training, important aspects in the defence of the rights of the child, because children too should know their rights in order to claim them.

53. **Mr. Degia** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Declaration adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children were all intended to defend the rights of children. For countries where poverty, conflicts, instability, pandemics, environmental degradation and natural disasters hindered development, and which were therefore vulnerable to shocks in the global economy and the financial and food crises, it was difficult to achieve those objectives. In order to remain masters of their own economic and social development, those countries were in need of support, especially financial support, from the international community. The Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha should be treated as an opportunity for developed countries to establish a global partnership with a view to providing financing for the internationally agreed development goals.

54. Although there had been a decrease in child mortality globally, the trend was quite the reverse in some countries stricken by HIV/AIDS. That pandemic was especially threatening for small island developing States, whose people were their most important resource. CARICOM called on the international community to devote more funds and attention to that issue. In the meantime, CARICOM Member States were acting to put in place programmes to combat national AIDS and public education programmes, with assistance from UNICEF, Governments and non-governmental organizations. On the regional level, CARICOM had created the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS.

55. Prevention was a key component of that struggle, and the CARICOM countries had invested in education, which they viewed not only as a means of combating child labour and the spread of HIV/AIDS, but also as a means towards economic and social development. Throughout the region, primary and secondary education was free for boys and girls, and in most cases mandatory for children between the ages of 5 and 16.

56. Aware that the rights of women and children were inextricably linked, CARICOM promoted those rights as part of a holistic approach to human rights and development. The gender and development subprogramme of the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development provided for a number of measures to ensure implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Those measures related to child protection and justice for children and migrant children, and also included a workplan covering four areas: child abuse, legislative reform, child labour and parenting roles.

57. *Ms. Seanedzu (Ghana), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

58. **Ms. Rovirosa** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, reaffirmed its commitment to implementation of the major international children's rights instruments and the Millennium Development Goals.

59. Despite the principles unanimously adhered to by the international community, millions of the world's children continued to suffer due to lack of human and financial resources and the absence of a genuine will to transform commitments into concrete actions. Comprehensive development during childhood must be

the number one priority in order to build an egalitarian society and eradicate poverty. The Rio Group believed that international cooperation was necessary to strengthen the capacity of States to overcome obstacles to the welfare of children and achieve the goals set out at the special session of the General Assembly on children.

60. The Rio Group was concerned about the universal nature and magnitude of the problem of violence against children in all its forms. It must be addressed through protection, prevention and anti-impunity measures that took gender differences into account and involved the State, the family and society.

61. Despite progress in the region, child labour continued to be a serious problem in the countries of the Rio Group. With the support of ILO, they were implementing several programmes on the national and regional levels to combat that scourge and promote legislation on the issue. Given that more than half of the 54 million children under the age of five in the Caribbean and Latin America lived in poverty, it was urgent to implement early childhood development programmes.

62. Declaring its readiness to take an active part in the cooperation mechanisms that the United Nations system should put in place to support efforts by States to eliminate all forms of violence against children, the Rio Group urged the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on violence against children as soon as possible, as requested by General Assembly resolution 62/141.

63. The Rio Group, along with the European Union, continued to participate actively in negotiations for a draft resolution on the rights of children, which it hoped would be adopted by consensus.

64. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (Gulf Cooperation Council), said that they had acted to fulfil their obligations to promote and protect the rights of children, giving priority to their survival and safety and their protection from all forms of violence and exploitation. They had taken steps to guarantee children's rights as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in a way that conformed to the sharia and Arab social values, which did not view the child in isolation from the family, the basic unit of society.

65. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries had established a primary health-care network that ensured universal medical coverage. According to the childhood indicators, the child mortality rate had decreased considerably. As to education, all children attended school and the level of education for both girls and boys had risen. Furthermore, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries were enjoying a higher standard of living both economically and socially.

66. Some of the Council countries had been drawing up national strategies for the advancement and protection of children's rights. Children's commissions had been set up to coordinate national policies and monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Programmes had been organized to provide training in the principles and provisions of the Convention and educational manuals for the public had been published to explain how they were linked to the rights under the sharia.

67. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries had provided data to the United Nations study on violence against children. They had established institutions and set up services that received complaints of child abuse and conducted medical examinations and investigations in a manner that protected the dignity of the victims, who had subsequently been helped to reintegrate into society. Well aware of the importance of coordination and cooperation on the regional and international levels, the Gulf Cooperation Council States were developing a mechanism to coordinate the work of the bodies working on childhood and family issues, and they were also working closely with UNICEF. They welcomed the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which guided the States parties to the Convention in implementing its provisions, and they would do everything possible to enable the Committee to fulfil its obligations effectively and credibly.

68. Commending the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her efforts to ensure that the demobilization of child soldiers in the course of peacekeeping operations was not the ultimate end but rather their reintegration into their communities, and to provide educational and training opportunities for them to make the reintegration sustainable. It was, however, important for her to reflect in her reports the tragedies experienced by children under the yoke of foreign occupation.

69. *Mr. Majoor resumed the Chair.*

70. **Mr. Kurosaki** (Japan) expressed the hope that the Third World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children would help to maintain the momentum of the international struggle to combat that scourge.

71. Much remained to be done on the issue of children affected by armed conflict, especially with regard to the post-conflict reintegration of former child soldiers, which entailed not only protecting the children themselves but also creating a child-friendly environment in the society. The approach should be centred on the individual and the community. The right of children to survival and development had to be taken into account in policies aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially with regard to the eradication of poverty and hunger and to education, gender equality and health. Japan intended to continue contributing actively to efforts to safeguard children's rights, including improved access to good medical services.

72. The Government had revised its domestic laws to allow more effective action to combat violence against children, and believed that it was urgent to take steps to protect children and help victims to recover.

73. **Mr. Ahmed** (Sudan) observed that since its accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, his Government had taken steps to incorporate the provisions of the Convention into domestic law, so that they had become legally binding.

74. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement and the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement all contained provisions to protect the rights of children and put an end to all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation during armed conflicts. The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan as well as many laws drew upon the text of the Convention in order to safeguard its principles. The 2007 Armed Forces Act was particularly important for the protection of children in armed conflicts. In cooperation with the National Strategic Planning Council and in consultation with UNICEF and civil society organizations, Sudan was also committed to achieving the third Millennium Development Goal, having adopted a five-year plan for the period 2007-2011 for the protection of children.

75. It had also adopted a framework document for the period 2006-2015 relating to protection of children, entitled "Sudan Fit for Children", patterned on the objectives of the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on children. The Government had undertaken to provide health services and education to every child in the country, in an effective, productive partnership with civil society organizations and in cooperation with several ministries. The Uniform Code on Children, adopted in 2004, had given a new impetus to protecting the rights of children. The first meeting of the Children's Parliament organized to help them devise policies in the future, take decisions and participate in the democratic process, had proved very successful.

76. Sudan hailed the efforts made by UNICEF in the areas of nutrition, health, education and propagation of a culture of peace, in cooperation with Sudanese authorities. It hoped that the peace process would succeed and that the Government would have the means to consolidate peace by reintegrating war victims, including children, into society and assuring them the needed basic services in the areas of education, health and food security. The Government would continue, furthermore, to work with the Arab Children's Centre on integrating street children into society and providing them with the necessary services.

77. His delegation was deeply concerned over the critical situation of children living under foreign occupation in Palestine and in the occupied Syrian Golan, who were deprived of their essential rights to education and health services. It called upon the international community to act to end that situation by summoning the necessary will to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, put an end to the occupation and free all the Occupied Arab Territories.

78. **Mr. McMahan** (United States of America) said that in order to achieve the goal of reducing child mortality by two thirds by 2015, efforts must be results-based, and success must be measured in terms of the number of lives saved, rather than the number of strategic plans, workshops or conferences. As its largest donor, the United States was pleased that UNICEF had renewed its commitment to results-based programming.

79. Recalling the principles reaffirmed by the General Assembly at its special session on children, he pointed out that families were the first line of defence against many systemic ills and that Governments should create conditions that allowed strong and healthy families to thrive.

80. Protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence remained a priority. Children were increasingly being subjected to exploitation for sexual tourism. According to a United States research centre, the average age of victims of child pornography was decreasing, while the sexual acts were becoming more violent.

81. He also expressed concern at the situation of children trafficked into debt bondage and forced labour; children were particularly vulnerable in the context of armed conflict. It was incumbent upon States to address such issues as the denial of humanitarian access and child soldiering.

82. He urged States to ensure that domestic laws would prohibit and punish trafficking in children, as well as their sexual exploitation, and supported collaborative efforts to combat that phenomenon. He welcomed the concern expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding sex tourism and Internet child pornography, adding that his country, whose legislation criminalized sexual tourism, was working towards the eradication of those grave practices. He encouraged other countries to implement extraterritorial legislation on the matter.

83. On the issue of health, the United States provided significant funding for programmes aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality and child malnutrition, and it was the leading financial donor to the global effort to eradicate polio. In combating HIV/AIDS, the United States was partnering with UNICEF on an emergency plan that had recently been reauthorized for another five years; however, the number of children affected by HIV/AIDS continued to grow, particularly as a result of mother-to-child HIV transmission. United States-led services had managed to prevent 200,000 infant HIV infections.

84. Education was the key to a life of dignity and a prerequisite for development. The United States had increased the amount of resources allocated to education for children worldwide. Dropout rates had decreased by half in five years. Targeting the literacy of mothers was crucial in helping more girls receive primary education.

85. Despite all the progress achieved, much work remained to be done. Cooperation and efficiency on the ground must be improved in order to better respond to the needs of children in emergencies and to improve development programmes.

86. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that child protection was a priority for her country, as illustrated by laws and policies that had been implemented at the national and local levels. Colombia continued to strengthen its efforts to promote children's rights, in particular, by taking steps to improve access to health care and education and to combat child labour.

87. Demobilization of illegal armed groups had contributed to the elimination of violence against children, a top priority for her Government. In addition to measures adopted to prevent recruitment of children by terrorist groups in both urban and rural at-risk areas, actions had been taken to punish all forms of violence against children.

88. Recalling the recommendations set forth in the report (A/63/227), her delegation emphasized those recommendations that addressed United Nations coordination with non-State actors, and stressed that national policy and existing measures must prevail. With regard to the discussion in the report of the changing nature of conflict, she questioned the validity of such an approach, particularly in view of the principles of international humanitarian law.

89. International cooperation was crucial in strengthening national capacities to promote the rights of the child. The rise in food prices, migration, the effects of climate change and the global financial crisis, each of which had an indisputable impact on the situation of children, called for joint solutions at the international level.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.